
10

**running
mistakes
you're
probably
making**



Whether you're new to the sport or a seasoned pro, there's always room for improvement. Watch out for these common errors

Last year, huge numbers of new runners laced up their trainers and took to the streets. Between March and June 2020, 858,000 people downloaded the Couch to 5k app, up 92% on the same period the previous year. For both new and experienced runners, there's always room to enhance performance, so we asked the experts for their advice on how to eradicate common mistakes, and make yourself a stronger runner in the process.

1 THE WRONG TYPE OF SHOES

Coach and Hoka One One athlete Adam Hickey notes that many new runners start out in the wrong type of footwear – for instance, wearing general sports trainers rather than specific running shoes that offer more cushioning and support. 'I recommend all runners get their gait analysed to establish what type of support they require in their trainers, which will hopefully prevent niggles and time out from this fantastic sport,' he says.

2 THE WRONG-SIZED SHOES

Many people also fail to purchase the right shoe size, especially in these days of online shopping. 'Buying your regular shoe size can often result in issues like trauma to the toenails,' says Nick Newman, manager at the Runners Need store in Camden, London. 'I'd recommend going a half size bigger. A good guide is to have a minimum of half a thumb's width at the end of your toes if you run up to half-marathons, and up to a whole thumb's width for marathons.' This is to allow room for your feet to swell as they get hotter and splay out as you go through your gait cycle (the movement from heel strike to heel strike).

3 GOING TOO FAST

'People believe that walking is slow and running is quick, which leads them into the mistake of running too quickly in order to justify the fact that they are running,' says Chris Betteridge, We Run coach (we-run.co.uk). 'As a beginner, focus on running

often and running well. The golden rule for beginners is aim to complete each run with 50% left – in other words, be confident that you could do it all again straight away if you had to.' This means that at the beginning, what you achieve may feel small, but eventually your 50% will help you conquer a 10k and you'll feel unstoppable.

4 DOING TOO MUCH, TOO SOON

Upping your mileage too quickly is a common error by both new runners and those who have taken time off. 'So many of the injuries I see are from runners who used to run long distances, had a long non-running

“People run too fast to justify the fact they aren't walking”

spell and tried to come back too quickly,' says Betteridge. 'If you've had a prolonged absence from running, enjoy the basics and fall in love with running all over again.'

5 NEGLECTING YOUR POSTURE

Runners are often focused on distance, pace or simply getting to the end of the workout rather than concentrating on their posture. But if your back stoops into a form that is less efficient, it can leave you more susceptible to injury. 'Run tall by lengthening from your tailbone to the back of your head – run proud,' says Betteridge. 'Keep your chest high and your breathing light, and relax your arms in order to drop your shoulders.'

6 RUNNING FOR EGO

Think about the reasons why you run. Those who choose secondary motives such as weight loss, personal bests or accumulated

miles often end up feeling demotivated or getting injured. It's key to ensure you're running for enjoyment. 'Aim to surrender all secondary motivations,' says Betteridge. 'Then all you have left is the goal of enjoying your run. Enjoy the headspace, the freedom, the movement and sense of achievement. After that, running becomes easy.'

7 **NEGLECTING STRENGTH WORK**

As a runner, it's easy to focus on your target race, whether it's a 10k or marathon, and concentrate on building mileage in your legs. However, introducing a strength and conditioning session into your training can make a huge difference to your running form, endurance and avoidance of injury. 'Strength at range is important for performance and injury prevention – so do the remedial work,' says Betteridge. Strength work can take many forms – yoga, Pilates or gym/weights sessions – but anything is better than nothing.

8 **RUNNING THROUGH PAIN**

'One of the biggest mistakes I see runners make is thinking they can simply run pain off,' says Lyndsay Hirst, physiotherapist at Your Pilates Physio (yourpilatesphysio.com). 'First

you need to understand what is causing the pain and how likely it is to ease. Most of the time it's a biomechanical problem that can be improved with the right advice and exercise. I always try to keep my clients running during treatment, but there are occasions where this is not possible.'

9 **IGNORING THE GLUTES**

'One of the most common areas of weakness I see in runners is the glutes,' says Hirst. 'Weak glutes and lack of stability around the hips and pelvis will almost always lead to problems in the lower limbs, so glute-strengthening exercises are a must for any runner. Tight, overactive hamstrings are often combined with this, so building in hamstring stretches can also be effective.'

10 **FUELLING INCORRECTLY**

The final mistake both beginners and experienced runners often make is not eating or drinking enough. If your run is longer than 90 minutes, consume carb-providing energy, such as drinks, gels or bars, as you run. This will help you avoid the dreaded 'bonk' when your legs turn to concrete and you feel you can't go on due to glycogen depletion. **HFM**

FIVE CYCLING MISTAKES THAT YOU'RE PROBABLY MAKING, TOO

It's not just runners who need a little guidance sometimes. With help from James Golding, endurance cyclist and Wattbike ambassador (wattbike.com), we've broken down the things that you can do as a cyclist to help improve your efficiency and enjoyment.

► **FOLLOWING A 'RULE BOOK'**

'One difficulty getting into cycling nowadays is the amount of information that's out there,' says Golding. 'There's no specific way you should look or ride. Riding a bike is about being free, and exploring without boundaries.'

► **NOT TWEAKING YOUR BIKE SET-UP**

'Often when you buy a bike, the handlebars, shifters and saddle are set up incorrectly for the rider,' says Golding. This can easily be fixed by simple tweaks such as ensuring the saddle is at hip height when you stand next to the bike.

► **CHANGING YOUR RIDING POSITION**

'Sometimes, people see pros riding and want to "look pro", so they try to adopt an efficient riding position on the bike, but it doesn't do anything for comfort or longevity,' says Golding. 'I'd recommend joining a cycling club and chatting to other riders to pick up tips.'

► **WEARING THE WRONG KIT**

'Be comfortable on your bike and you'll achieve much more as you'll enjoy riding and stay out longer,' says Golding. Choose your clothing carefully, and make sure you have enough layers on in winter.

► **EATING TOO MUCH OR NOT ENOUGH**

'People often don't eat enough before, during or after a ride,' says Golding. 'Or in some cases they eat the wrong things. This can also come from "it's what the pros do".' Aim to eat small amounts every 20-30 minutes on long rides.

